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ESSAY

1798-1799

UPON THE
INTEREST of ENGLAND;

IN RESPECT TO
PROTESTANTS

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Dissenting from the Establish'd Church.

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ESSAY

Essay upon the Interest of England

UPON THE

Since the Wisdom of the Nation has thought
 it necessary to consider the Interest of England
 in its own Affairs, a private Man cannot do amiss, if he turn
 his thoughts that way too. And instead of shew-
 ing what is the Interest of England in respect to her
 Foreign Friends and Allies, to give her a new
 the ought to carry it to her own Members, and
 Domestic Friends. Especially since our present and
 future Success depends in a great
 measure, upon the steps, that shall be made in the

business, which we now propose to consider.
 Which is the Interest of England in respect to Pro-
 testants (for its only concerning them that we make
 the enquiry). Dissenting from the Church of England,
 as by Law established, is not any part of my
 design, to shew, what is the Duty of the Govern-
 ment to Nonconformists. That has been so excel-
 lently managed by an able Pen, in some Letters con-
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be a loss to the Nation, more upon that subject than~~

to report or reprint them. My business at present is
to shew how England ought to behave her self to the

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Essay upon the Interest of England.

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fit to turn from the consideration of our af-
fairs abroad, to inspect the posture of things at
home; a private Man cannot do amiss, if he turn
his thoughts that way too: And instead of shew-
ing what is the Interest of *England* in respect to her
forreign Enemies and Allyes, to give her a hint, how
she ought to carry it to her own Members, and
Domestic Friends. Especially since our present and
future Success against the former depends in a great
measure, upon the steps, that shall be made in the
business, which we now propose to consider.

Which is the Interest of *England* in respect to Pro-
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the enquiry) Dissenting from the Church of *England*,
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cerning

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cerning a Toleration, not long since, that it would be a folly, to do any thing more upon that Subject, than to repeat or reprint them. My business at present is to shew how England ought to behave her self to the Dissenters, from the advantage or disadvantage (abstracted from the Consideration of what is due to them from the Law of Nature, and the first notions of Government) she may receive from them; according to the Different influence, that her Different Carriage may have upon them.

This is the Question in General. Now since the Government and the Church of England are the only two Bodys, whose Carriage can affect the Dissenters; and since their Carriage can be (compared with what it is at present) but either Moderate or Severe; This General Question must consist of these two. 1. Whether it be the Interest of the Government to Treat the Dissenters with Severity or Moderation? And 2. Which of the Two (whatever be the Interest of the Government) is the Interest of the Church? But before I enter upon the Discussion of either, I would premise: That by the Government of England I mean the present establishment of King, Lords and Commons; without any alteration, that may rob the King of his Rights, or the People of those, that are known to be theirs. In this I can't be Mistaken.

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I would explain my meaning too a little about Severity and Moderation. I shall use these terms in a comparative sense, referring them to the present carriage of those Subjects, of which they are predicated. Now the Circumstances that Dissenters are in at present, are known to be a toleration of their way of Worship, and an admission of any of that persuasion, to enjoy any Place or Office, upon his receiving the Sacrament according to the manner of the Church of England, at his first admission. Now then if the Government wou'd carry it more severely to the Dissenters; It must either make a new Test, which wou'd particularly keep the Dissenters out of Offices of Trust: Or take away the Laws that Tolerate 'em all: And leave 'em to the penalty of those statutes, which oblige 'em to Worship God, according to the manner of the Church of England only. This would be severity in the Government. And, 'tis all the severity, the Church can use at present, to make all the interest she can (which is very great: Particularly as she is Represented by Men of her own Body in the Legislature) with the Government, to procure it.

But on the other hand if the Government wou'd carry it kindly to the Dissenters; It must at least let things remain as they are, without any alteration to

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their

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their prejudice; Which satisfies the Dissenters well enough: Or if the Government wou'd carry the good natur'd part further, and give higher Instances of their kindness and desires to Oblige; It must enlarge or remove the present Test; repeal those Penal Laws, which are levell'd against the Dissenters; and establish their way of Worship. But tho' these are things that the Dissenters cou'd not but be well pleas'd with; yet they are things, that are not possibly so very proper to be thought of at present, and things which they are well enough contented without. But be that how it will: 'Tis certain that one or the other of these wou'd be instances of grateful Moderation in the Government: And 'twou'd be sufficient Moderation in the Church, if she wou'd use her Interest to procure it.

But Partys are at a vast height, and our Divisions very great. A stiff Obstinacy on both sides will keep our wounds fresh and open. And a yielding compliance is the onely way to heal 'em. That I may not chafe the sore, and make it look hot and Angry, when I pretend to dress and heal it: I'll forbear Enquiring either into the Advantage, that wou'd accrue to *England* by its Moderation; or whether it would be for its Interest to enlarge the Test, and settle the Dissenting way of Worship: And one-

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ly prove that to frame a Test, which shall make the way to Places and Offices of Trust, not only inaccessible to Dissenters, but more difficult, than that already in being, is against the Interest of the Government and of the Church. Whether you do it in a more easie, or in a more harsh and open manner, there is no great Difference. For still you touch the Dissenters in a sensible part, and you cannot expect but they will complain. There's no doubt but the Government is too wise, to attaque so considerable a Body as the Dissenters, without first endeavouring to render it weak and feeble. But Endeavour to weaken it, by only forbidding Persons in Office to go to Dissenting Meetings: Forbid 'em to frequent those Meetings, without inflicting any penalty, but only that (if that may be call'd a Penalty) of making their Office to them to become void, or by any other the most gradual and insensible Methods you can contrive, and yet still, with submission, I think it may be prov'd, that it is against the Interest of the Church, and of the State. Onely by the way, let the Reader take notice, that if it be prov'd; that this, which is the lowest instance of severity to the Dissenters, be against the Interest of England; it will follow of Course, that all higher Instances are much more so.

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That my Arguments may be more clear, I'll only suppose two things, which I think no Man will deny. The one is, that this carriage will disoblige the Dissenters; and the other is, that it will weaken 'em. However, if any one shou'd think me too bold with my Reader in begging these propositions; Let him consider; If it will not disoblige the Dissenters, to hinder them from enjoying the advantages of this Government, who were so hearty in establishing, and have been so Instrumental in maintaining it. If it will not make 'em uneasie, to see Places and Offices of Trust taken away from them, and given to Men, that should either hate them, or the Government, or both. Will it not be the greatest affront to them, to make such a Test, as will induce the World to believe 'em to have principles, which make 'em unfit to be trusted? Nay, from whence a Man must collect (as every one must from a negative Test, that should onely forbid Men to frequent or go to Dissenting Meetings) that the Government thinks the Dissenters more unfit for places of Trust, merely because they Worship God in a Meeting, than it does an *Atheist*, a *Deist*, a *Socinian*, or a *Libertine*, that either owns no God, or Worships none after a Christian manner. Or if this Consequence be not justly drawn; why must there be a Test contriv'd
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against Schismatics, when there is none in being, or design, that has yet been heard of, against those more heinous Offenders?

If we cou'd suppose a Dissenter furnish'd with a Stock of Stoicism, sufficient to keep him in temper, under these Reflections: Can it be thought he wou'd remain so, when he consider'd, that such a Proceeding, had in all probability a further design, than the bare exclusion of Dissenters from Offices; and was an Engine brought upon the Stage, on purpose to take away the Toleration? Which he must think it was, if he thought at all. For since there is no way to repeal the Act of Toleration with safety, but by lessening and weakening the number of those it tolerates; He ought to conclude that when once that Game begins, and Resolutions are taken, to weaken the Dissenters, the Extirpation of the Schism, is the thing intended. And will he not be confirm'd in this Opinion beyond Contradiction, when he sees the Test that shall be Calculated for this End and Purpose (by being such as shall only hinder Men in Office from going to Meetings) to be contrived like a Net that will keep back the Dissenters from Office, whilst it is large enough to let Libertines in Principle and Practice pass; lest it shou'd engage that sort of Men to combine with the Dissenters, who by an united force

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must necessarily break it. For if it were merely the Design to keep all ill men out of Office, and it were allow'd that the Dissenters were ill men, yet a Test (that was to keep out ill men, as such) ought not to be contriv'd to keep them out alone, unless they were the only ill men in the Kingdom. And by the way, tho' the *Free-Thinkers* of the Age, as they are pleas'd to stile themselves, may imagine that a Test, that forbids men in Office to go to Meetings, does not affect them in the least, yet that is the only Comfort that an honest Dissenter can take in such a Test, that after *those Men of Thought* have willingly seen the Dissenters in Office robb'd of the Liberty they justly enjoy, they'll quickly after find themselves depriv'd of the Liberties, which if they don't unjustly enjoy, they have shamefully abus'd. Now can any Dissenter see a Test set on foot, which does not only take away his Place, but threatens the Liberty of his Conscience too, the most valuable Blessing that the late Happy Revolution cou'd confer on him, more valuable far than the Security of his Civil Liberties or Estate; and not be oblig'd? The Reader that can suppose this, must suppose a Dissenter to be something inferiour to a Machine of Pastboard which complains and makes a Noise when you strike it, and not a man of like Passions with himself.

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And as such a Test as this must disoblige the Dissenters; so it must of necessity weaken 'em too. If we could suppose, that all Dissenters were so strongly persuaded of the Truth, and the necessity of their Principles, as to believe all others False and Dangerous; or, That they would prove so true to their Principles, as not to suffer any private Interest to warp 'em. Then indeed no Severity could lessen their Number. But if we consider a great part of the reputed Dissenters, to be Persons, to whom either Mode of Worship is either wholly, or, in a great measure, indifferent: And another part to be such, as would quit their Principles sooner than their Advantage or their Livelihood, (for that must be the Case of a great many Dissenters, if a Test should take place which they could not comply with) and that all of 'em would be liable, more or less, to the Solicitation of their Passions, either of Shame or Ambition, of Hope or of Fear: We must conclude, That a Test, that deprives all Persons of Places, that should ever go to a Dissenting Meeting, must lessen the number of Nonconformists. For it would rob the Meetings of all Trimmers, and self-interested Dissenters, and these two making a great part of the Dissenters of Figure and Fashion, and of almost all in Office; what a mighty part of the Populace must they draw

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draw from the Meetings after 'em? Who (for such sort of Men there are among all Denominations of Christians) would presently entertain a scandalous, or a mean Opinion of a good Sermon at a Meeting, if they did not hear it in the Company of a Knight, an Alderman, or a Justice of the Peace. And what is yet worse, it would not only rob the Meetings of these Gentlemens Company, but of their Assistance and Affections too: Which must turn to indifference (as Love does to all Objects, that it does not converse with) if it did not turn to Persecution and Malice, to shew the sincerity of their Conversion.

Those of the Dissenters, that remain true to their Principles, notwithstanding these Temptations, must expect to be harrassed and brow-beaten, ridicul'd and affronted at every Party-cause, that comes on. They must all in general prepare to bear Hardships, when there shall be no Person in Commission in any County, or upon the Bench in any City, to give 'em Countenance. And their Parsons in particular to be thought the most ridiculous Animals in the Universe; and must, in prudence, never appear in any Company or Assembly, but under a Masque. Now if discouraging the Dissenting Ministers (who are the only Heads of their Party; for they have
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been Honest and so Undesigning, as not to seek for any Political ones) and keeping Men of Sense and Figure from undertaking that Sacred Function, by the dreadful Prospect of Scorn and Reproach, be not one of the most effectual Methods to root out the Schism; I confess, I don't know any. I'm sure, this, with those I just now mention'd, will, if it does not root out the very Name and Being of Dissenters, do in effect (since *de apparentibus & non existentibus eadem est ratio*) the same thing. For that small parcel of People, which remain, will become the most dispirited, unactive Men imaginable: Retir'd from all publick Business, and careless how Affairs go. Since when Men despair of bettering their Circumstances, 'tis but natural to sit still and be quiet.

Now these two Concessions being made, the Proof of the Question will not be difficult. For, from the first, it will follow: That if it be the Interest of every Government, to keep their Subjects from Uneasiness, which would loosen their Affections to that Government; and, on the contrary, to rivet 'em in its Interest, by a present Advantage, or the Expectations of a future one: And if this has particularly been a Maxim observ'd with the greatest Nicety and Success, by a Neighbouring-

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Commonwealth, whose Foundation could never bear the pressures she lies under, were it not for the Support she finds from a constant Observance of this Principle; when certainly it cannot be for the Interest of England, by doing any thing to disoblige the Dissenters, to take the quite contrary course. For, from the nature of the thing, it appears, That Uneasiness under any Government, unhinges a Man from that Government that makes him uneasy: And according to its different Degrees, and the different Passions that govern the uneasy Man, makes him either useless or prejudicial.

If he be of a mild and quiet Disposition, which carries him to extenuate an Injury; and his uneasiness rises no higher than Jealousies and Suspicions; yet this Man shall become useless: And like a Member cut off from the Body, perform no Ministry to the whole. For is it to be expected, that he should give any assistance to those that he thinks wou'd use it to make him miserable: And thither all uneasiness tends in a greater or in a less degree. I confess if the Dissenters were all of 'em an inconsiderable parcel of People, poor and Ignorant, without Interest or Influence; their being easie could do us no service, nor their Uneasiness any hurt. But
since

since a great many of the Dissenters are Men of Sense and Substance, considerable by their Moneys vested in Trade, and the share they have in the Lands of England; and who, with the assistance of the Government cou'd make a Considerable Interest for its support; It won'd be worth the while to consider, whether any of the little ends, that the Enemies of the Dissenters should propose to themselves, by disobliging 'em, cou'd counterballance the loss of their direction and their Purse,

The ready Subscriptions of Money to the Government, was the most melancholy prospect the French King had, during the late War. For it was a certain sign that while our will was good, our Treasure was not to be exhausted. And tho' there is more Blood in the Body now, then there was during some of the last Years of the War, when Flanders drew away so considerable a part of our Nourishment; yet if the Government should cut off the Dissenters from all hopes of preferment, possibly it wou'd find that one of her main Arterys was cut, which us'd to bring her Exchequer a constant supply. We should learn then but at too dear a Rate, who were the Men that advanc'd Money during the late War with that readiness and ease, which cou'd always revive us under our greatest Discouragements, and damp

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damp our Enemy's in the midst of their success. 'Tis in vain to think, that the Dissenters, if they once come to be jealous of a design against them, will ever be tempted by the little baits of discounts and interests, to assist any persons to ruin 'em. Self-preservation which no other principle can stifle or resist, will keep 'em from lending a sword to any that they suspect will turn its point upon the Men that lent it, and stab 'em then in their Consciences. And if once our Subscriptions fail, *France* will have little to fear. But there is no need of insisting on this consideration any longer, for I'm afraid we are but too sensible of the truth of it already.

And a sad truth it is: but yet not the worst of the story. For more is to be feared from a Man, whose natural temper carries him to resent and revenge. He'll dread the Government, when he don't revere it. He'll murmur and repine, fret and complain. His Blood shall grow slower and corrupt; shall taint his Breath; and his Talk carry the infection to his Neighbour. And a Man may guess without being a Conjuror where these things will issue. Love is the best Obligation to Duty, for 'tis constant and effectually. Whereas Dread and Fear are passions, that can onely make Men do their Task by halves when the Eye of their Master is over 'em: But can never
make

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make the Master secure when his back is turn'd. Dissenters are considerable for their Number, as well as their Substance. Some who pretend to have consider'd the matter, compute them according to the most modest calculation, to bear the proportion of 1. to 4. Wou'd it be good policy then to disoblige a 4th. part of the People of England; and to shake 'em off from every dependance on the Government, but that of Dread and Fear? Would it be prudence to tempt them to murmur and repine, and some violent Wicked Spirits perhaps to what is worse? And that at a time when to the great grief of every true English-man, People seem to be so universally discontented and uneasy, so jealous and apprehensive. When Love, the band of Society and Perfection, seems to be burst; and a great many of the Cords with which we had bound up our Leaky Vessel, broken and cast away? Is this a time, when all Hands should be a lost, trimming the Sails, and managing the Pump, to employ a great many in cutting the Cords by which she hangs together? because a few treacherous Mariners pretend they are rotten, and yet produce no better, nay none near so good, to put in their place.

But I would not be mistaken when I say these things.

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I don't say the Dissenters will ever carry it thus and fret and repine against the Government, contrary to their avow'd Principles, tho' it should disoblige 'em. Nay I must own that their principles would engage 'em to perform the duty that they owe to a Government (tho' it uses them unkindly) for Conscience sake; and would give 'em that degree of Passive-Obedience, which would make 'em commit their cause quietly to God, to whom revenge belongs; waiting for the time when he shall repay it. But I'm sure severity in a Government tends to make Men forget their principles, or contradict 'em. And a carriage as opposite to the Interest of *England*, as 'tis to their Principles, is all that must be Expected from them as Men. And if they have Vertue enough, like Christians, to act above Revenge, methinks it should not be the Interest of their Enemies, to give them such an opportunity, to put those vertues in exercise, which must put them to the blush, and make the *World* confess, that instead of deserving severe treatment, they were the Men (since they are truly great and fit to Rule, who are fit to suffer) that are to be oblig'd with Offices of trust; if it be the decrees of Heaven, that *England* shou'd ever retrieve her Reputation and Honour. What I have said, that I may
not

not be misunderstood, I'll sum up in these two words. That he who should advise the Government, to disoblige the Dissenters, upon a supposition, that they wou'd resent it, is an Enemy to *England*. And that he who shou'd give that advice, in expectation that they would bear it with a vertuous patience, is a sworn Enemy to the Christian Faith.

Thus much we may gather from the first supposition. From the second, which shews, that a Test, that shou'd keep Dissenters out of places, must weaken 'em; it will appear, that it must weaken the Government at present, and our Establishment for the future. For will it not rob the Government of the service of a great body of Men, who are as willing and as able as any, to serve in the Commissions of Taxes, Peace, and Lieutenancy; In the Bench of Aldermen and Assistants; In the Courts of Judicature and Offices of State; Or in Commands at Sea or Land, as any of their Fellow Citizens? Will it not take all Dissenter out of his Majestys Navy, and keep 'em from listing themselves for his Land service? For is it to be expected, that any will undergo the dangers and fatigues of a Seaman or a common Soldier, who knows he can never receive any greater reward than his common pay?

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Or if a Test should be contriv'd only to keep Dissenters out of the Civil Government: And Military Employments should be left in the condition they are in at present. Then pray give me leave to ask, why the Dissenters should be thought fit to serve the King in one capacity and not in the other? Is it not to the Dishonour of the Government, or of the Church, to have a Dissenting General? And would it be to their dishonour to have a Dissenting Statesman? Are not fidelity, conduct, and courage, requisite in a Soldier? And will not these fit a Dissenter for a civil Office too? Why then if notwithstanding the cases are the same, do we act as if they were different? The business must be this, Dissenters shall have posts of danger as many as they please, that they may dash themselves against their Enemies, like post-herds one against another; or that, as *David* said in the case of *Uriah*, the hand of the Enemy may be upon 'em, and rid the Earth of such a generation; but can't please God they shan't have a post of Civil honour. But pray have a care if ever this come to be the case, and you ask the Dissenters to enter into his Majestys service, they don't make the same answer, that the People of *Rome* did to the Orator upon the recession to mount *Aventine*. No, say they, Let them go to a War that share the advantages of the Common Wealrh. For our part
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"we have but little to lose, and let every one take care of their own. But since you resolve to have all the advantages of a War, We'll have none of its dangers. Thus you'll incapacitate all Dissenters for Offices. And when you have done that, you need not do any thing more to incapacitate 'em from bearing a Part in the Legislature. For when they shall no longer be in Commissions in the Countys, nor of the Bench, in the Citys and Burroughs of England, their Interest, which depends in a great measure upon their power and authority, must necessarily sink and fall. Nay they will be so far from being able to get in any of their own Body into Parliament, that they will not be in a capacity, to give any tollerable assistance to their Friends. Which is a consideration, hardly to be overballan'd by any advantage, that those Gentlemen can propose to themselves, who come into Parliament by a Dissenting Interest. Now certainly it would be worth the Enquiry, what should move any one (by endeavouring to keep the Dissenters out of all places in the Government and under it) to endeavour to make such a number of Men, as the Dissenters in England amount to, useless?

Possibly it is that by turning them out, they may make room for more useful Men. Very likely so in truth. For Non-Abdicators, Non-Affociators and

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Non-Jurors, or any thing else, that begins with a Non, are much more useful men to some certain purposes, than Non-Conformists. And when the latter are turn'd out, there will be so many Vacancies, that the others must of necessity be put in, to supply their place. Then the hopes of the Golden Age will begin to revive the drooping Spirits of a great many good Men, who had fainted if they had not liv'd to see this fair prospect of Salvation, by seeing those Gentlemen fill the Offices of England, who were against the Abdication of the late King James, and the Association to support King William. Who never qualified themselves by a Civil Test, (the very thing they unjustly blame the Dissenters for, in that of a Religious one) till honour, or advantage, or may be designs of greater service engag'd 'em. Then we shall see that policy in its height (but I'm afraid too late to correct the Error) which is built upon this Mistaken Maxim: That we may neglect our Friends, so we do not disoblige our Enemies. And then 'twill show it self in its proper colours, when once we incapacitate the Dissenters for Office, in order to introduce some of those Men into their place, who have been always true to ill Courts, and false to a good one. And who if they had any hand in settling this Government, or none in opposing it, are since grown wile enough to repent of it.

But

But further, Incapacitating Dissenters will not only weaken this happy Government, by removing its props and supports at the present, but overthrow that Constitution, of which we boast so much, by weakening the foundation on which tis built. Every one knows, that the *English* Constitution consists of the Prerogatives of the Crown, and the Liberties of the People. Now tis certain that this Constitution can only be preserved by a Ballance of Power, or of Inclination. I. e. to explain my self, either by a power in the Crown, as able to maintain its prerogative, if the People shou'd have an Inclination to invade it; as the People have, to maintain their Priviledges, if the Prince shou'd have an Inclination to retrench 'em: Or if the Crown has not a power to maintain its Rights, equal to the power, the People have to maintain theirs: then the Prerogative of the Crown must subsist by taking away an inclination from all the People of invading the Prerogative (which is hardly possible) or from such a part of them, as may oppose others, that have such a design. And the latter is all that the Crown can do here to its own preservation. For since the Kings Lands are not considerable, nor his Tenants many; Since his Revenues are not great, nor his Domesticks numerous, nor his Officers of State independant on the People; Since he can, neither

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raise; nor borrow money without the consent of Parliament; The Crown has no native or internal power (as it has in absolute Monarchys) to preserve it self; but depends upon an inclination in a Majority of the People (as the Crown of Israel did) to maintain it.

The People on the contrary have an internal power by their Number, Property and ready Money, to maintain their own Priviledges against any unjust usurpation. So that the Case of the Prince and the People are just opposite. For as the Prerogative has an inward inability to maintain it self, and depends upon a foreign Inclination; The People have an Inherent power to maintain their Liberties; which can be injured by nothing, but an Inclination in a part of their own Body, to betray em, in order to enlarge those of the Crown. So then. As the security of the Crown (as we remarked but just now) depends upon this, that no body of Men superior to the rest should have an Inclination to rob the Prerogative: So the security of our Liberties depends upon this, that no Body of Men superior to the rest, should have an Inclination to betray themselves, in order to enlarge the Prerogative of the Crown. By this time I promise my self, I have sufficiently explained the meaning of a Ballance of Power, and of Inclination

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or Partys. And I hope it will not be taken amiss. For when we know that the Sphere of our Libertys, and the Princes Prerogative are not preserv'd like two Globes, supported by proper Pedestals, able to bear their own weight; but rather like two of *Carter's* Whirlpools, by having either an equal and necessary Power to preserve themselves, or an equal Power by accident to hinder mutual destruction; we shall, it may be, take more proper Methods to preserve 'em.

But this by the way. To Return. An Inclination to preserve the Prerogative of the Crown, depends upon Principles of Judgment: such as these: That it is as much the lawful Right of the King, and as much for the Interest of *England*, for the Prince to enjoy his Priviledges (which are call'd the Prerogative) as tis for the People to enjoy theirs. And an Inclination in the People to preserve their Rights, depends upon such Principles as these: That a King is a Minister of God, made to rule by the consent and choice of the People, upon condition, that he shall preserve the People in their Rights and Priviledges; and forfeit their Allegiance when he breaks 'em. On the other side, an Inclination in the People to give up their own Rights, and to enlarge the Prerogative of the Crown, depends upon these known

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Principles : That the Crown must not go out of the Right Line : That while that Line is kept sacred and inviolable, The King can do no harm : But if it be once broken, that a King can do no good.

If things then be thus, we need no more, to come to a certain knowledge of what is the Ballance of England, and whether a Test which weakens the Dissenters, tends to preserve or destroy it ; than to know who are the Men to whom these Principles respectively belong : And that is not hard to determine. The Whiggs, of which the Dissenters have always made a considerable part, (and with whom that Interest is so closely connected and interwoven, that it can't fail to share the same fortune) have been the Men noted for their Popular Principles, and for having always acted suitably thereto. They have been a firm Rampart to the Liberties of the People against all the Assaults of Arbitrary Power; and have so heartily oppos'd the Designs of ill Reigns, as to get the Names of *Commonwealth's-Men* : But who to shew, that they were thorow Friends to our Constitution, and were for defending the Prerogative vested in a good Prince, who they knew would use it to their Advantage, and who deserv'd Marks of their Gratitude, for the great Deliverance he had wrought, have gone so far on the obliging

liging side in this Reign, as to be termed Apostates and Courtiers, in reproach.

But was there ever any reproach more unjust? Have not the Whigs acted with the truest Prudence, in curbing the Prerogative under ill Reigns, when our Danger was chiefly at Home; and in giving it it's full play, when being in the hands of a good Prince, we have no Abuses to fear among our selves; and have potent Enemies, against whom, a larger Power may be us'd, to our Advantage, Abroad? Are the Whigs Apostates, because they oblige a good Prince, and think it an Honour to be his Courtiers; who wou'd not favour the Unjust Designs, and disdain'd to serve in the Family of an ill one? On the contrary, are not the other side Apostatiz'd from their Principles? Or rather had they ever any? Who have been Courtiers in Reigns, when they ought to have been our *Patriots*; and shroud themselves under a good Name, when a happy Government makes 'em asham'd of their true one. What account can be given of these things? Unless those Gentlemen have hit it, who say, they are bound to maintain the Prerogative right or wrong, when 'tis in the Right Line; and are always bound to oppose it, when 'tis turn'd out of its Course.

To contract the whole of this matter into as narrow a compass as we can, that it may be seen at one View

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View, take this abstract of the Demonstration. If the preservation of the Ballance or Constitution of *England* depend upon a preservation of the Prerogative on the one hand, and the Liberties of the People on the other: If moreover the Prerogative can't be preserv'd, nor the Liberties of the People destroy'd, (which are the onely Alterations we can fear) but by an Inclination in the People to preserve the one, and not to give up the other: If moreover these Inclinations depend upon Popular Principles; and the Whigs are the Men noted for those Principles, and a steady Practice conformable thereto: And if the Dissenters are known to be the Men, with whom the Whigg-Interest must rise or fall: It is certain, that to weaken the Dissenters, is to destroy the Ballance of *England*.

And thus I have dispatch'd the first Consideration, What is the Interest of the Government of *England*. Let us now consider what is the Interest of the Church. And for Gods sake, Brethren, do you consider it well your selves! Lay aside Prejudice and Passion. Forget old Quarrels, and little Piques of a latter date. Bring a cool temper, and a Mind willing to be convinc'd, and ready to be reconcil'd! And then tell me, whether it can be for the Reputation of a Christian Church, (whose Duty it is to represent the Meek-

Meekness, the Forbearance, the Gentleness, the Kindness of our common Head, in all her Proceedings) to use her Interest with the Government to treat the Dissenters, who are Members of the same Body, with Severity? Will this Carriage recommend Religion, and be a convincing proof that, that good Spirit of Christ guides you, whose presence alone makes your Acts to have any Force or Authority? Or can it be any Instance of your Kindness, to deprive your Brethren, the Dissenters, of the Advantages, to which their Birth gives them, as just a Title, as any you can lay claim to; and of which, by consequence, they ought to have an equal share? Can a design to engross the Advantages, when you bear but a part of the Burthens of the Society, proceed from that Wisdom that is from above, which is kind, gentle, peaceable, and easie to be intreated? Or has it not that Selfishness, whose property it is to seek its own things, and not the things of another, which discovers it to be of a lower Original. And tho some Men, heated by fighting Prizes in Divinity, and blinded by the Dust they raise, may fondly imagine that such a proceeding will be taken for a just temporal Discipline (a thing foreign to the Design of the Gospel) that ought to be us'd, to reclaim Schismatics; yet will not others, that are in a better position to see Truth, than they, when they consider how lit-

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tle of Spiritual Censure the Church of England uses to her corrupt Members; rather think such a Severity to be Opinionativeness and Obstinacy, and an effect of Heat and Passion, with the want of Christian Forbearance, than any true Discipline us'd towards Members that are cut off, in order to reduce 'em?

But further, *Brethren*: Can it be for your Safety, to do any thing that shall weaken this Government, under which our Religion is protected, and upon which the Protestant Interest does depend? Is it consistent with your Security to use your Endeavours to split the Protestant Interest into Parties, and to widen the breach, when 'tis attack'd by the Devil, heading an Army of Devils, Socinians, and practical Atheists, at Home; and endeavouring an universal Confederacy of Papists abroad? Shall the Zeal of propagating Heresy join separate Interests, and unite the heads of of distant Countrys; And shall not a holy fear of their success, and a pious Resolution to resist it, cement us; when by having the place of our Nativity comon to us both we have a common Interest, and a common End to pursue? Or is an endeavour to disoblige the Dissenters, the way to unite and strengthen us? Has the Church of England more to fear from the Dissenters, who agree with her in 36 of her Articles, and differ from her, but in 3; than she has from Atheists and De-

ists,

ists, who disown *em* all and the holy Books, in which they are contain'd. Or is she in more danger from Nonconformists, who are incorporated with her into several Societys, to support the credit of Religion; and were never particularly band'd for betraying it, by an ill life and practice, than from those Libertines, who disown all Religion in fact, and expose it to contempt? Or to be free, has the true and ancient Church of England more to fear from Dissenters, who often join with her in Worshipping their common Lord; than from those Gentlemen, who in one Breath say that all Schismatics (and such they say are all those, who have left the center of union) are out of all ordinary means of Salvation; and that consequently they had rather be a Papist than a Schismatic; and in the next, inveigh against the Government for deposing *James II.*, and against the Church, for falling from that center of union (suppos'd to be the corner stone of the building) and immediately retire from her Communion (I suppose as Schismatical) to a small Community of their own? If not, and it appear that that the Church of England is in greater danger from the Enemies of Religion, and of the Government; and from some of her violent, Friends, who subvert her Constitution, whilst they pretend to settle her upon her true foundation; than she:

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she has from the Dissenters, who stand upon the same bottom, and only differ in the Simplicity, or the Ornaments of the Superstructure: Then certainly 'tis not only against the Reputation and Safety, but for the Interest of the Church of England, (for the Dissenters will be found to be the Ballance of Religion, as well as of our Civil Constitution) to incorporate our Strength with her own, that she may stand the better against the Designs of her Enemies. Or if notwithstanding all that can be said, the Church of England will remain of the Opinion, that the Dissenters are her Enemies: For God's sake, since they are of less importance than the rest, let her not use her Endeavours to weaken em till the last.

But perhaps it will be Objected: That all, that I have said, is to no purpose, since I build all these Arguments upon the supposition, that a Negative Test, Obliging all Persons in Office, to forbear going to a Meeting, will disoblige the Dissenters, and turn em out of their places: Whereas the Dissenters have shewn, that nothing shall bar them from advantages. For that since so many of em have taken the Sacrament according to the Church of England, 'tis not to be suppos'd, that they will boggle at any thing, that shall be requir'd, to qualify them for a Place.

If this Objection be of force, I wou'd gladly know to what end the Test is made? Since it appears from the Objection, that this will do the Church no service, and yet be a Temptation to the Dissenters to wound their own Consciences. For certainly a Number of Men that shall only go into a Church to Disguise their opinions, and to keep their Places; and shall laugh at her Modes of Worship, as soon as ever they are got out, are not the Men, that are likely to strengthen the Church (nay 'tis the effectual way to overthrow it) merely by being reputed to be Members of her Society.

But suppose it for once, that a Negative Test as it does not strengthen the Church, shou'd not weaken the Dissenters: yet certainly it will disoblige them. And if there be no other ill consequence of a negative Test, but this, it ought to weigh a great deal in determining the Matter.

But in the last place, it appears, that the Dissenters might qualify themselves for an Office, by receiving the Sacrament after the Manner of the Church of England, according to their known Principles. This will follow (since none will deny but a Test forbidding Men in Office to go to the Meetings wou'd directly thwart those Principles) that there is no likelihood of their complying with the one, from

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their compliance with the other, if this can be made out the Objection will wholly vanish. And it will be made to appear at the same time, that it does not follow from the Dissenters qualifying themselves for Offices, by a sacramental Test, that they are "Men that act purely for Interest. That make their Conscience stoop to secular advantage; That are practizing Profane's in Religion. And do nothing but play at Bo-peep with God Almighty."

To shew this, We must call to mind that the Dissenters hold the Church of England, to be a True Church in her Fundamentalls; But corrupted in the Modes of her Worship. From the first of these two Principles it follows, that they think it lawful to have Communion with her. For since she holds Christs the Head, the Dissenters have an invisible Communion with her, in the same Faith and the same supplies. And consequently might have an outward and visible Communion with her too; If their second Principle did not hinder; that is, if by that outward Communion, they shoud not countenance those Corruptions in the Modes of her Worship, which they think themselves oblig'd to disown and to disavow. For if the Dissenters go voluntarily and out of choice to her Communion, they think they declare by their practice, they like her Communion corrupted (as they

But if any Circumstances make, a countenancing of the Corruptions in the Church of England, an unnecessary conclusion from their Receiving the Sacrament with her, they think the case alter'd, and that then they may lawfully receive it. And they are of opinion, that this Case happens, when they have Communion with the Church of England, as oblig'd by Act of Parliament; thereby to declare, they are no Papists; In order to qualify themselves for an Office, in which they think they may do their Country Service.

Since they hold Communion with the Church of England in this Case, as a true Church of Christ, without Countenancing her Corruptions. For when a Dissenter receives the Sacrament with the Church of England, principally as a Religious Act, and to a Civil purpose in a Secondary sense, which purpose the Act of Parliament sets forth, is to shew, that he is no Papist. No Man can from his Communion with the Church of England in these circumstances, conclude (that which every one might from his communion in any other) that he approves those Modes, which the Dissenters call corruptions; unless his declaring that he is no Papist

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ist, can be said to approve them. In a word, The first of these Principles obliges the Dissenters to hold constant communion with the Church of England; but the second supercedes it, and makes the Dissenters abstain from that communion; till the circumstances of things remove the second Principle out of the way; and then upon that occasion, the first is of force. From all this it appears, That the Dissenters may, without incurring the charge of Hypocrisie, or of making a Religious Act serve merely to a Secular Interest, receive the Sacrament occasionally in the Church of England, to qualify themselves for an Office; when they can do it, in any other Case. And since it appears, that the Dissenters have not contradicted their Principles in taking the positive Test now in being: Let it not be thought till it can be prov'd that a Negative Test can consist with those Principles (which I am sure it never can) that it will not disoblige, or weaken the Dissenters, because, that for the Advantage of a Place, they will be brought to comply.

ADVERTISMENT. The Author has occasioned a great many Mistakes in the Press, as well as in the Composition. I hope the Reader will forgive the following ones, and take the trouble to correct the greater. Page 16. l. 18. 19. Read thus: His Blood grown sower and corrupt, shall taint his breath, p. 19. l. 20. for Dissenter, read Dissenters. p. 20. l. 9. for a Dissenting Statesman, read Dissenting Statesmen. p. 20. l. 19. 20. for they can't please God, they shall have a post of Civil honour, read But can't please God not a post of Civil honour. p. 20. c., l. 24. for Recession, read Secession.

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